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## Is Neo-Calvinism Calvinist? A Neo-Calvinist Engagement of Calvin's "Two Kingdoms" Doctrine

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# Is Neo-Calvinism Calvinist?

## A Neo-Calvinist Engagement of Calvin's "Two Kingdoms" Doctrine<sup>1</sup>

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by Jason Lief

In his article "The Two Kingdoms: A Reassessment of the Transformationist Calvin," David VanDrunen challenges the neo-Calvinist interpretation of Calvin's eschatology, specifically regarding the "two kingdoms" doctrine.<sup>2</sup> The neo-Calvinist expression of this doctrine in the terms of "antithesis" provides the eschatological framework for the engagement of culture in the context of the struggle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil.<sup>3</sup> In this context Christ's death and resurrection represent

the climactic victory of God, which inaugurates the redemption and restoration of creation. The problem, according to VanDrunen, is that this perspective misinterprets and badly distorts Calvin's position. He argues that Calvin believed that the two kingdoms, the spiritual and temporal, are distinctly separate from each other, with different functions and government. The spiritual kingdom—as the realm of the gospel, redemption, and eternal life—is governed by Christ through the Church and is concerned with the future, heavenly life to come. Corporeal, or creational, life is relegated to the temporal or civil kingdom. In this sphere, God directs and rules through natural law, reason, and civil government. According to VanDrunen, the spiritual kingdom of Christ has nothing to do with this realm. He writes, "Calvin makes a categorical distinction between the church and the rest of life, and identifies the kingdom of Christ and the promise of redemption only with the former."<sup>4</sup>

A primary focus of VanDrunen's argument is Calvin's insistence that the two realms remain separate. He writes, "Against the attempt to apply redemptive categories in approaching cultural issues, Calvin disallows the gospel, in which the message of redemption lies, from being applied to the civil kingdom."<sup>5</sup> The underlying theological basis for this separation is the protestant understanding of justification. Salvation "by grace through faith" means that the saving work of the gospel can only be properly assigned to the spiritual realm. Our work in the temporal realm is

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not redemptive or restorative; it is a response of gratitude to God as we live holy lives of obedience. VanDrunen believes that the neo-Calvinist position disregards this separation, encroaching upon a form of “works righteousness” by calling for the transformation of creational structures and cultural life in the name of Jesus Christ.

VanDrunen demonstrates how Calvin insisted upon maintaining the distinctions between the two realms. He points out Calvin’s dualistic language, not only with regard to the two kingdoms but also in reference to the human person, reminding us that Calvin describes this earthly, temporal life in harsh, negative terms, in contrast to the future, eschatological hope of the life to come.<sup>6</sup> So is VanDrunen correct? Have neo-Calvinists misrepresented Calvin’s eschatology, specifically his “two kingdoms” motif, in calling for the transformation of creational life in the context of Christ’s redemptive work?

The purpose of this essay is to address the relationship between Calvin’s two-kingdoms perspective and the neo-Calvinist<sup>7</sup> understanding of eschatology. Beginning with a discussion of Calvin’s “two kingdoms” motif, set in the context of Calvin’s theology, this paper will demonstrate that the neo-Calvinist perspective does reflect the eschatological thought of John Calvin’s “two kingdoms” doctrine.

### **What does Calvin mean by “two kingdoms”?**

The two-kingdoms doctrine of both Luther and Calvin is a modification of Augustine’s two-cities perspective, which emphasizes the confrontation between the city of God and city of man (or of the devil). In his book *The Political thought of Martin Luther*, W.D.J. Cargill Thompson explains Luther’s two kingdoms perspective, differentiating between his use of the term “kingdom” and “regiment.”<sup>8</sup> While the term “kingdom” focuses on the apocalyptic struggle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil, there are two regiments—the spiritual and the temporal<sup>9</sup>—within each kingdom. Each regiment is governed differently and corresponds to different aspects of human life. The spiritual regiment governs the life of faith, grace, and salvation through the church, while the temporal regiment regulates

corporeal life through reason, natural law, and civil authority. Differentiating between these two regiments demonstrates that the spiritual and temporal regiments are not in opposition to each other. While the distinction between them must be maintained, both are used by God in the struggle against the kingdom of the devil.<sup>10</sup>

While the focus of Thompson’s work is Luther’s perspective, Calvin also differentiates between “kingdom” and “regiment.”<sup>11</sup> He maintains the struggle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil, emphasizing the victory of God in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>12</sup> Less apocalyptic than Luther’s perspective, Calvin is more concerned with the means by which we participate in the benefits of Christ’s atoning work.<sup>13</sup> In this context, Calvin focuses more on the role of the two regiments within the kingdom of God as the means for bringing restoration and order in preparation for the future eschatological blessing.<sup>14</sup>

This role leads to a few important questions: How does Calvin understand the relationship between the two regiments? More specifically, how do both regiments relate to the biblical proclamation of Christ’s lordship, not just over the church but over all creation? If Calvin’s two-kingdoms doctrine is examined within the context of his theological understanding of anthropology and Christology, we gain important insight regarding the answers to these questions.

### **Calvin’s Anthropology**

Calvin speaks of the human person using body/ soul categories, even going so far as to refer to the soul as the higher, or nobler, part.<sup>15</sup> While this view suggests the influence of neo-Platonic thought, we must be careful not to over-estimate the influence of Plato on Calvin with regard to this issue.<sup>16</sup> Given his historical and theological context, Calvin inherits a manner of speaking about the human person that undoubtedly reflects the influence of Greek philosophy. These categories are also found in many of the creedal and confessional statements affirmed by the Reformed tradition, namely the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic confession. However, in *Man: The Image of God*, G.C Berkouwer emphasizes

that the use of such language does not necessarily represent a dualistic understanding of the human person. He writes,

The decisive question here is whether the confessions in their use of anthropological concepts intend and mean thereby to give positive statements on the composition of man, or whether they make use of these concepts (as does Scripture) in a very free and imprecise manner, intending by means of them to refer to the whole man. There is a great difference between non-scientific references to a dual aspect of human nature and a thesis that man is composed of two substances, body and soul.<sup>17</sup>

While his writings may be a more “scientific” treatment than the confessions regarding the nature of humanity in relation to God, I believe that

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Berkouwer’s statement applies to Calvin’s thought as well. Calvin’s use of body/soul categories does reflect neo-Platonic influence; however, a closer examination reveals a Biblical anthropology that emphasizes the unity of the human person, which can be seen in his understanding of the body/soul relationship.<sup>18</sup>

Calvin’s description of the soul as the seat of the image of God in humanity must be understood in the context of his understanding of the soul’s relationship with the body. He writes, “And though

the primary seat of the divine image was in the mind and the heart, or in the soul and its powers, there was no part even of the body in which some rays of glory did not shine.”<sup>19</sup> Taking this further, Calvin believed that the soul, as the image of God in humanity, gives the body life and direction. Again, he writes, “Moreover, having already shown from Scripture that the substance of the soul is incorporeal, we must now add...[that] it however occupies the body as a kind of habitation, not only animating all of its parts, and rendering the organs fit and useful for their actions, but also holding the first place in regulating the conduct.”<sup>20</sup> While Calvin makes a clear distinction between body and soul, refusing to identify the body with the image of God, his understanding of the human person is fundamentally an inter-related unity of body and soul.

More problematic is Calvin’s reference to the body as a “prison” and to this temporal life as a “pilgrimage.”<sup>21</sup> Such language seems to suggest a negative, possibly Platonic, understanding of the body and temporal life. In her essay “Theology, Anthropology, and the Human Body,” Margaret Miles examines this issue, focusing upon Calvin’s negative use of the term “flesh”:

In the fallen condition of human being, the body shares with the rest of creation in bearing “part of the punishment” by its participation in a world in which the whole order of nature has been confused, but Calvin is careful to emphasize that “the offense is not with the work itself but with the corruption of the work” (2.1.11). The body plays no role, for Calvin, either in the corruption of the soul or in its own corruption, but is the helpless victim, along with the soul, of the destructive hegemony of “flesh.”<sup>22</sup>

Miles argues that Calvin understood the problem of “flesh,” not as bodily or cultural existence but as life in the fallen condition.<sup>23</sup> Thus, when Calvin speaks of the body as a “prison,” or when he refers to temporal life as a “pilgrimage,” he is speaking to the fallen condition of humanity, which he also describes as life lived “under the cross.”<sup>24</sup> Therefore, redemption in Christ does not negate the temporal, cultural life; rather, redemption in Christ addresses the curse of sin

and its effects on temporal life.

Calvin believes that the work of God in Jesus Christ forms “us anew in the image of God” so that humanity might receive the “quickening Spirit,” which brings regeneration and “renovation.”<sup>25</sup> This renovation occurs through unification with Christ by faith, through which the image of God is restored and renewed in humanity. However, this renovation is not for the soul alone. Just as the soul gives life to the body, so too the “quickening” of the soul leads to the quickening of the body.<sup>26</sup> Miles writes, “Because of the operation of the Spirit of Christ within the human spirit and body, not only is the human mind quickened, but the body is also vivified. Becoming ‘one body with him,’ the Christian, being made a partaker in his substance, ‘feels the result of this fact in the participation of all his blessings’—an embodied experience.”<sup>27</sup> Just as Calvin’s understanding of the body/soul relationship is of a holistically created human person, so too redemption in Jesus Christ is not just the salvation of the soul but affects the entire human person.

### Christology

Interestingly, Calvin connects his understanding of the human person with his Christology by using the body/soul relationship as an analogy for properly understanding the relationship between the two natures of Christ. He writes,

For we maintain, that the divinity was so conjoined and united with the humanity, that the entire properties of each nature remain entire, and yet the two natures constitute only one Christ. If, in human affairs, anything analogous to this great mystery can be found, the most apposite similitude seems to be that of man, who obviously consists of two substances, neither of which, however, is to be intermingled with the other as that both do not retain their own properties.<sup>28</sup>

Just as the human person consists of a unified body and soul, Calvin believed that the person of Jesus Christ consists of the unification of a divine and human nature, with each maintaining its distinct characteristics without confusion. In the spirit of Chalcedon, Calvin is concerned that the divine essence of Christ not be diminished,

while still maintaining the reality of his human nature.<sup>29</sup> Calvin’s Christological emphasis is fundamentally concerned with soteriology, namely the perfect atoning work of Christ. In the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ, God accomplishes what fallen humanity could not.<sup>30</sup> Because of the fall, humanity cannot be saved by our own works, done in the corporeal, temporal realm. Only through the perfect obedience of Christ is grace merited, and only through unification by faith is grace appropriated.<sup>31</sup> Thus, for Calvin, justification by faith means appropriating the grace made possible only through the work of Christ. This grace is available only in the “spiritual” realm, through the preaching of the Word and the sacraments, because it is solely the work of God. While justification can never be achieved through works within the temporal realm, the effect of grace, “sanctification,” does address the realm of creational life through the transforming power of the Spirit.<sup>32</sup>

Within Calvin’s Christology we see the outworking of his soteriology, specifically God’s work on behalf of humanity (justification), and humanity’s obedient response (sanctification). While the distinction between justification and sanctification is essential in Calvin’s understanding of soteriology, he believed that they are two inseparable parts of a unified whole. Calvin writes, “The *whole* may be thus summed up: Christ given to us by the kindness of God is apprehended and possessed by faith, by means of which we obtain in particular a *twofold benefit*: first, being reconciled by the righteousness of Christ, God becomes, instead of a judge, an indulgent Father; and, secondly, being sanctified by his Spirit, we aspire to integrity and purity of life.”<sup>33</sup> For Calvin, the “spiritual” benefit of Christ’s work restores our love for God, which then manifests itself in temporal life as we love our neighbor. He writes, “There cannot be a surer rule, nor a stronger exhortation to the observance of it, than when we are taught that all the endowments which we possess are divine deposits entrusted to us for the very purpose of being distributed for the good of our neighbor.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, the two spheres of human life—love of God (spiritual) and love of neighbor (temporal)—are inseparably bound together. Commenting

on Jesus' summary of the law, he writes, "On the other hand, the love of God cannot reign without breeding a brotherly affection among men."<sup>35</sup>

Rooted within this soteriological unity of justification and sanctification we discover Calvin's basis for a Christian engagement of culture life. Vocation specifically becomes the means by which believers fully engage the cultural life, using their gifts to "cultivate the particular department that has been assigned to [them]" for the benefit of their neighbor.<sup>36</sup> In *The Christian Social Organism and Social Welfare: The Case of Vives, Calvin, and Loyola*, Abel Athouguia Alves writes, "Calvin argued that honest and upright work in one's station for the common good of all is an individual's offering to God and a prerequisite for a Godly society.... With concupiscence restrained by God's grace, the individual assumes a social role for others, demonstrating faith through the fruit of good works."<sup>37</sup> Thus, while justification involves the restoration of the relationship between humanity and God, this restoration leads to sanctification, which manifests itself in the temporal realm as a love for neighbor, which seeks to bring restorative order to society.<sup>38</sup>

## Two Kingdoms Revisited

Having established these connections among Calvin's understanding of the human person, the person of Christ, and soteriology, we now engage his perspective of the "two kingdoms." VanDrunen approaches this doctrine in the context of wanting to preserve the distinctions between justification and sanctification. In doing so, he overemphasizes the distinctions between the two regiments at the expense of their unity. Calvin, on the other hand, begins his treatment of temporal authority with unity, not with diversity. He writes, "For although this subject seems from its nature to be unconnected with the spiritual doctrine of faith, which I have undertaken to treat, it will appear as we proceed, that I have properly connected them, nay that I am under the necessity of doing so...."<sup>39</sup> Once again, Calvin employs the body/soul analogy to describe the proper relationship between the "two regiments." He writes, "But he who knows to distinguish between the body and soul, between the present fleeting life and that

which is future and eternal, will have no difficulty in understanding that the spiritual kingdom of Christ and civil government are things very widely separated."<sup>40</sup> Just as he does with the person of Christ, Calvin sought to maintain the distinction between the two regiments, believing their natures should never be confused. This distinction is rooted firmly in his soteriology, as he maintains that redemptive grace is found only in the "spiritual regiment" (justification) and can never be achieved in the "temporal realm" (sanctification). However, as with the human person and the person of

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Christ, the two regiments cannot be separated. While they must retain their proper boundaries, never claiming authority over issues outside their jurisdiction, this distinction does not support the assertion that the kingdom of Christ is unrelated to the temporal, or civil, regiment.<sup>41</sup>

Instead, the language Calvin uses with regard to distinction differentiates the means and function of power within the two realms. Sheldon Wolin writes,

In Calvin's case, however, the rediscovery of institutional life led to a rejection of the antithesis between the two types of power and of the assumption which underlay it. Civil government and ecclesiastical government did not symbolize distinctions of kind, but of objectives. Their natures, therefore, were more analogous than antithetical.<sup>42</sup> Here we come to see that the power exercised by the two regiments is the power of God, in Jesus Christ. This power brings justification within the spiritual regiment through the preaching of the



Word and the administration of the sacraments, as governed by the Church. But this same power brings sanctification within the temporal realm through reason, civil government, vocation, and cultural life, in which faith is expressed by loving our neighbor through seeking peace, justice, and civil order. What is the source of this power and, therefore, the unifying principle of the two regiments? Just as the body and soul holistically constitute one person, the two regiments holistically constitute one kingdom, with one Lord, Jesus Christ.<sup>43</sup> The Lordship of Christ, not just over the spiritual realm but over the entire cosmos—a significant theme throughout Calvin's commentaries—is this unifying principle.<sup>44</sup>

Karl Barth, in *The Theology of John Calvin*, provides a wonderful metaphor for this relationship when he describes the temporal kingdom as a parable, or sign, of the kingdom of God, or what he refers to as a “temporal image of the eternal righteousness of God.”<sup>45</sup> Jürgen Moltmann describes this perspective as follows:

There is no exact similarity between the state and the kingdom of God, but there is no exact dissimilarity. Their relationship is to be perceived as that of parable, correspondence, and analogy; this approach understands the justice of the state from the Christian view of the Kingdom of God, believed in and proclaimed by the church. Politics, like culture, is thus capable of acting as a parable, a picture of correspondence, for the kingdom of God, and necessarily so. Because of this, Barth calls the civil community the outer circle of the Kingdom of Christ. Since the Christian community as inner circle and the civil community as outer circle have their common center in Christ the Lord and their common aim in the kingdom of God, the Christian community, by means of political decisions, will urge the civil community to act as a parable by corresponding to God's justice and not contradicting it. It wants the state to point toward, and not away from, the kingdom of God.<sup>46</sup>

Abraham Kuyper, in his essays on common grace, reflects a similar perspective. He emphasizes the “number of combinations and

organic connections” that “unite human life into a single whole, in keeping with the original creation ordinance.”<sup>47</sup> As he explains,

The Christian religion has seized upon this to promote mutual growth into one entity as well as to advance the glory of God in that connected whole. The same is true of our life together in the home, of our life together in society, of the common world of thought, of customary practices in business, art, and science, and many more. All these are examples of life-connectedness in the human race, connections which we have not made but find.<sup>48</sup>

From this emphasis upon the organic unity of cultural life, Kuyper discusses the relationship of the church, defined as an organism, with the broader temporal existence of humanity. He writes,

We are thoroughly misguided, therefore, if in speaking of the church of Christ . . . we have our eyes fixed almost exclusively on elect persons . . . Christianity is more than anything social in nature. Paul has pointed graphically and repeatedly to these three: body, members, and connective tissue. The church as organism has its center in Christ; it is extended in his mystical body; it individualizes itself in the members. But it no less finds its unity in those original “joints,” those organic connections, which unite us human beings into one single human race, and it is on those joints that the spirit of Christ puts its stamp.<sup>49</sup>

Here we find in both Barth and Kuyper the outworking of Calvin's thought regarding the relation between the “spiritual” and “temporal” regiments. In both cases, the kingdom of God has Christ and his church at the center (the spiritual regiment), with an outward movement that embraces all of creation, including political, economic, and cultural life (the temporal regiment). At the same time, both of these perspectives are undergirded by the Christian hope of consummation, which informs and directs the Christian engagement and participation in the temporal realm.<sup>50</sup> They clearly reflect the “now” and “not yet” eschatological understanding of the kingdom, which, VanDrunen implies, is foreign

to Calvin's thought. Yet a reading of Calvin's commentaries demonstrates his belief that the kingdom of God has been inaugurated in Christ's death and resurrection, not just for the church, not just for the "spiritual regiment," but for the world. For example, in his commentary on John 12:31, he writes,

Now we know, that out of Christ there is nothing but confusion in the world; and though Christ had already begun to erect the kingdom of God, yet his death was the *commencement* of a well regulated condition, and the *full restoration of the world*. Yet it must also be observed, that this proper arrangement cannot be established in the world, until the kingdom of Satan be first destroyed, until flesh, and everything opposed to the righteousness of God, be reduced to nothing."<sup>51</sup>

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*While Calvin emphasized the future hope of consummation, he also believed that the kingdom of God is a present reality and that the restoration of "all things" is "in the course," which is the basis for the neo-Calvinist emphasis upon transformation.<sup>53</sup>*

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And commenting on Acts 3:21, Calvin writes,

As touching the force and cause, Christ hath already restored all things by his death; but the effect doth not yet fully appear; because that *restoring is yet in the course*, and so, consequently, our redemption, forasmuch as we do yet groan under the burden of servitude. For as the kingdom of Christ is only begun, and the perfection thereof is deferred until the last day, so those things which are annexed thereunto *do now appear only in part*.<sup>52</sup>

While Calvin emphasized the future hope of consummation, he also believed that the kingdom of God is a present reality and that the restoration of "all things" is "in the course," which is the basis for the neo-Calvinist emphasis upon transformation.<sup>53</sup>

### **Conclusion: Is neo-Calvinism Calvinist?**

The implication of VanDrunen's argument is that the neo-Calvinist "transformative" eschatological perspective, which emphasizes the Christian engagement of the temporal realm as part of the kingdom of God, does not correlate with Calvin's two kingdoms doctrine. He argues that for Calvin, the temporal realm has nothing to do with the kingdom of Christ, and that for the church to apply the redemptive grace of the gospel to culture is to confuse justification with sanctification. I offer the following response based upon the above discussion of Calvin's two kingdoms perspective.

The use of the word "transformative" may be problematic and imply certain connotations that are misleading. The term implies social progress, the idea that somehow Christians can manipulate or "build" the kingdom through social and political action, which leads to an overemphasis upon human agency. Nicholas Wolterstorff, responding to this criticism of the neo-Calvinist position, writes,

Seldom will Christian social endeavor, no matter how insightful and devoted, result in what one could describe as "transformation." Usually it results in no more than small incremental changes—if that. An important element of Christian social action is learning how to act faithfully in the face of what Elul calls "inutility," without giving up hope.<sup>54</sup>

With his emphasis upon faithful living, I believe that Wolterstorff reflects Calvin's beliefs that justification leads to faithful living in the world under the lordship of Jesus Christ, using our gifts and vocation for the benefit of our neighbor. In this context the good that is accomplished, the "parables of the kingdom" that are evident, are not the product of human effort but the power of Christ's redeeming Spirit manifesting itself in



his people and in the world. While most neo-Calvinists who use the term “transformative” undoubtedly have this understanding in mind, finding a different expression might be beneficial.

VanDrunen also raises a valid point in arguing that the neo-Calvinist position has the tendency to over emphasize the present redemption and restoration of creation at the expense of the future hope of consummation. Wolterstorff acknowledges this objection and summarizes it this way:

Jesus is understood by neo-Calvinists as “the fixer,” an unfortunate but necessary remedy, rather than the pinnacle and destiny of creation. This role for Jesus . . . is understood and circumscribed within the frameworks of creation . . . making Christ’s incarnation necessary to the extent that he “fixes” or puts right the original purposes of creation.<sup>55</sup>

This critique is both important and legitimate. Neo-Calvinism risks overemphasizing the “now” aspect of the kingdom by focusing on the restoration of creational structures and losing sight of the eschatological hope that has characterized Christian worship for centuries. However, the potential neo-Calvinist distortion does not negate the biblical and theological truth concerning the presence of the kingdom of God—the “now” aspect of redemption—which I maintain is an important part of Calvin’s eschatological thought. The solution is not rejecting one side for the other; the focus must be maintaining a proper tension between the “now,” the presence of the kingdom at work transforming the world, and the “not yet,” the hope of consummation.

The potential neo-Calvinist distortion is no worse than the one it confronts—to be so focused upon the “life to come” that one ignores the significance of Christ’s lordship over this life and the grace and redemption made present through his death and resurrection. Again, the proper perspective is in the middle, holding the two in proper tension. Richard Mouw describes this tension the following way:

The transformationist camp is correct, as I view things, in expecting the transformation of culture . . . Human culture will *someday* be transformed.

Does this mean, then, that we must begin that process of transformation here and now? Are we as Christians called to transform culture in the present age? Not, I think, in any grandiose or triumphalistic manner. We are called to *await* the coming transformation. But we should wait actively, not passively. We must *seek* the City which is to come.<sup>56</sup>

What does this “seeking” look like? He continues, “Many activities are proper to this ‘seeking’ life. We can call human institutions to obedience to the Creator . . . And in a very special and profound way, we prepare for life in the City when we work actively to bring about healing and obedience within the community of the people of God.”<sup>57</sup>

The purpose of this essay has been to demonstrate the continuity of neo-Calvinist eschatological thought with the theology of John Calvin. In examining Calvin’s understanding of anthropology, Christology, and soteriology in the context of his “two kingdoms (regiments)” perspective, I believe it is clear that Calvin emphasizes the unity and inter-relatedness of the two realms as components of the kingdom of God. While Calvin’s writing reflects the language and ideas of his time, we must be careful not to apply labels, such as “dualist,” to his thought. Obviously, he inherited categories and theological arguments from his predecessors and contemporaries, willingly engaging and often embracing much of sixteenth-century thought. Yet the message of his writing emphasizes unity—the unity of body and soul in the human person, the unity of the two natures in the person of Christ, and the unity of the two regiments within the kingdom of God. Calvin refuses to reduce reality to one or the other—to the spiritual or material. He insists, as is seen in his arguments for the resurrection of the body, that reality is a complex unity, and that the work of Christ addresses the totality of creation.

Here we find the roots of the neo-Calvinist movement in the thought of Calvin: The refusal to reduce creational life to one of its parts. Creation is an inter-related unity of diversity, and the redemptive work of God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ addresses every part of creation. For Abraham Kuyper and those who

followed, the intention was to “to bring Calvinism into line with the kind of human consciousness that has developed at the end of the nineteenth century,” to which I would add the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as well.<sup>58</sup> As we continue this endeavor, we must work to maintain the proper eschatological tension between the present reality of the kingdom manifested in the world and the hope of future consummation and the complete restoration of creation in Jesus Christ.

## Endnotes

1. Thanks to Daniel Den Boer for his assistance in researching this essay.
2. David VanDrunen, “The Two Kingdoms: A Reassessment of the Transformationist Calvin,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 40 (2005): 248-266.
3. See Gordon J. Spykman, *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 65-66.
4. *Ibid.*, 252.
5. *Ibid.*, 259.
6. *Ibid.*, 252. He writes, “To summarize initially, Calvin’s two kingdoms doctrine may be characterized as a dualist approach somewhat akin to certain forms of dualism attacked by contemporary transformationists.” Also, “[Calvin] frequently uses the image of Christians as ‘pilgrims’ to describe their status in the present world, and he portrays their earthly lot as one of suffering and hardship...” (257).
7. Following VanDrunen’s lead, I too will use the neo-Calvinist label broadly, as to include under its umbrella the different manifestations of neo-Calvinism. See VanDrunen, “The Two Kingdoms” (249-250, footnote 5).
8. W.D.J. Cargill Thompson, *The Political Thought of Martin Luther* (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press Ltd, 1984), 36-61. Thompson differentiates between the terms “reiche” and “regimente,” which I refer to as “kingdom” and “regiment.”
9. *Ibid.*, 37-38.
10. *Ibid.*, 54. Thompson writes, “They [the two regiments] are bulwarks which God has enacted against the kingdom of Satan or weapons which he employs to combat the Devil.”
11. John Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.19.15. Also see Sheldon Wolin, “Calvin and the Reformation: The Political Education of Protestantism,” *The American Political Science Review* 51. 2 (June, 1957), 428-453. He writes, “In a highly revealing passage in the Institutes Calvin remarked that ‘it was usual’ to distinguish the two orders by the worlds ‘spiritual’ and ‘temporal’; and, while this was proper enough, he preferred to call ‘l’une Royasume spiritual, et l’autre Civil ou politique’ (regnum spiritual, alternum regnum politicum)” (433).
12. John Frederick Jansen, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Work of Christ* (London: James Clarke & CO., LTD., 1956), 88-90. Jansen argues that Calvin’s view of the atonement must not be interpreted in just sacrificial or penal categories, but must also include an overarching “Christ as victor” motif, in which Christ’s death and resurrection is understood as a “royal victory” over Satan. For evidence of this perspective in Calvin’s writings, see Comm. Matt. Xii. 29, and Comm. John vi. 15.
13. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989 One vol. edition). Specifically from book II chapter XV into book III Calvin speaks of the work of Christ in regard to the three offices of prophet, priest, and king, and how Christ has merited grace for the believer.
14. Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.20.2. Calvin writes, “But as we lately taught that that kind of government is distinct from the spiritual and internal kingdom of Christ, so we ought to know that they are not adverse to each other[.]... the latter is assigned, so long as we live among men, to foster and maintain the external worship of God, to defend sound doctrine and the condition of the Church, to adapt our conduct to human society, to form our manners to civil justice[and] . . . to cherish common peace and tranquility . . . But if it is the will of God that while we aspire to true piety we are pilgrims upon the earth, and if such pilgrimage stands in need of such aids, those who take them away from man rob him of his humanity.” Also see Sheldon Wolin’s discussion in “Calvin and the Reformation: The Political Education of Protestantism,” concerning Calvin’s thoughts on power and the appropriation of power through the two regiments.
15. Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.15.2. Also see Paul Helm, *John Calvin’s Ideas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), chapter 5, “The Soul.”
16. For a discussion on the influence of Plato on Calvin’s thought, see Charles Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977), chapter 8, “Calvin on Plato and the Stoics.” See also Helm, John Calvin’s Ideas, p. 31.
17. G.C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God, Studies in Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Wm. B. Eerdmans,

- 1962), 213-214. Berkouwer goes on to say, "The criticism of Dooyeweerd by other proponents...is not directed against various confessional formulations as such" (214).
18. Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy*, p. 65. Partee writes, "The lens of Calvin's spectacles were certainly tainted by Platonism here, but the source of Calvin's view of body and soul is the scripture." Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.25.6-8. Calvin deals with what he perceives to be two errors with regard to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body: the first, an overemphasis upon the body which diminishes the immortality of the soul, and second, a de-emphasis of the body which denies the bodily resurrection of those united to Christ. Thus Calvin argues for the unity of body and soul in the human person.
  19. Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.15.3
  20. Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.15.6
  21. Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.15.2, 3.9.1-4.
  22. Margaret R. Miles, "Theology, Anthropology, and the Human Body in Calvin's 'Institutes of the Christian Religion,'" *The Harvard Theological Review* 74. 3 (July 1981), 314. See also Gordon Spykman, *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics*, p. 329.
  23. For a discussion of Paul's view of the body, see J.A.T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (S.C.M. Press 1952).
  24. Miles, "Theology, Anthropology, and the Human Body," p. 311. Also see David E. Holwerda, "Eschatology and History: A Look at Calvin's Eschatological Vision," *Calvin and Calvinism* 9: *Calvin's Theology, Theology Proper, Eschatology*, Richard C. Gamble, Ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1992), 133-141, specifically p. 138, and Richard A. Muller, "Christ in the Eschaton: Calvin and Moltmann on the Duration of the Munus Regium," *The Harvard Theological Review* 74. 1 (January, 1981), 31-59. Muller writes, "Calvin does indeed contrast the 'spiritual body' of the resurrection with the 'natural body' of this life; but the contrast appears more as deliverance from 'hard and wretched' conditions of our earthly, crucified existence and as the result of divine blessing than as a dissolution of body. Calvin states the contrast in terms of Pauline vocabulary of corruption and incorruption. Rather than passing from corporeality to spirituality, the body passes from corruptible corporeality to incorruptible corporeality, the former being understood as the enlivenment of the body by *anima* and the latter as enlivenment by *Spiritus*" (36).
  25. Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.15.4.
  26. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.25.3. He writes, "For he elsewhere says that God did not raise up his Son from death to give an isolated specimen of his mighty power, but that the Spirit exerts the same efficacy in regard to them that believe; and accordingly he says, that the Spirit when he dwells in us is life, because the end for which he was given is to quicken our mortal body." See also 4.17.8.
  27. Miles 316. Also see Charles Partee, "Calvin's Central Dogma Again," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 18. 2 (Summer, 1987): 198. He writes, "Further, [w]e should note that the spiritual union which we have with Christ is not a matter of the soul alone, but of the body also, so that we are flesh of his flesh, etc."
  28. Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.15.1. Also see Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas*, 83-88.
  29. For significant treatments of Calvin's Christology see Francois Wendal, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, Trans. Philip Mairet (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 215-232. Paul Helm, *John Calvin's ideas*, Chapter 3 "The Extra." Helm deals specifically with the issue regarding the "*extra Calvinisticum*" in the context of the union of the two natures, as well as the "*communicatio idiomatum*." Also see Richard A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins*, Studies in Historical Theology 2 (Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, 1986), Chapter II, "Predestination and Christology in the Thought of Calvin."
  30. Richard Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, 27-29. Francois Wendal, *Calvin: Origins and Development of his Religious Thought*, 230 – 232. John Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.16.3.
  31. John Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.17.2-3. Calvin emphasizes that the obedience of Christ merited for us salvation: "salvation was obtained for us by his righteousness; which is just equivalent to meriting...so by the obedience of Christ we are restored to his favor as if we were righteous." In book 3.2.24, Calvin connects this justification with union with Christ: "Christ is not external to us, but dwells in us...." Also see Charles Partee, "Calvin's Central Dogma Again," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 18. 2 (Summer, 1987):191-200. Partee argues that the central organizing principle of the Institutes is "union with Christ." He writes, "Nevertheless, the exposition of his theology finds the presence of the union with Christ in so many places and in such a significant way that 'union with Christ' may be usefully taken as the central affirmation" (194).
  32. John Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.11.16-23.
  33. *Ibid.*, 3.11.1 (emphasis mine).
  34. John Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.7.5. Luther also insisted that we loved God by loving our neighbor. See Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, Trans. Robert C. Shultz

- (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), Chapter 11, "God's will for men." He writes, "The commandment to love our neighbor stands beside the commandment to love God. Basically these are not two commandments but one and the same . . . He wants nothing from us for himself, only that we believe in him. He does not need our work for himself. He does need it, however, for our neighbor. Loving the neighbor becomes the way in which we love God; and in serving the neighbor we serve God himself." He quotes Luther, "You will find Christ in every street and just outside your door. Do not stand around starting at heaven and say, 'Oh, if I could just once see our Lord God, how I would do everything possible for him'" (133). Cf. *D. Martin Luther's Werke*. Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimar, 1883), 20, 514.
35. John Calvin, *Commentary on Matthew* 22:39. See also Calvin's discussion of the relationship between the "two tables of the law" (*Institutes*, 2.8.11).
  36. John Calvin, *Corinthians Commentary* Vol. 1 Trans. Rev. John Pringle (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1948), 398. Paul Althaus describes Luther's perspective of vocation by saying, "God does not need earthly agents. It is by his own free decision that he calls and uses them to work together with him. He commands us to perform our tasks with zeal and to fulfill the demands which our vocation and position in life make on us . . . The success and result are and remain God's doing." He goes on to quote Luther: "What else is all our work to God—whether in the fields, in the garden, in the city, in the house, in way, or in government—but such a child's performance, by which He wants to give his gifts in the fields, at home, and everywhere else? There are the masks of God, behind which He wants to remain concealed and do all things." Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 108. Cf. WA 31, 436. Calvin echoes Luther's "mask" language with regard to political rulers, referring to them as "vice regents" through whom God is at work (*Institutes* 4.20.6).
  37. Abel Athougua Alves, "The Christian Social Organism and Social Welfare: The Case of Vives, Calvin, and Loyola," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 20. 1 (Spring, 1989): 10.
  38. Ibid. Alves writes, "Like Vives, John Calvin saw the death of Christ as an act of reconstitution for a human self and society broken by the Fall of man. Christ died to ingraft us to his body and transmit his benefits. Faith alone, granted by God's grace, reconstitutes the fallen self. The regenerated man, the Christian, dedicates both his body and soul to God as Christ did, and self love is replaced by self denial..."(8).
  39. John Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.20.1.
  40. Ibid., See also 3.19.15.
  41. Ibid., 4.20.2. Calvin writes, "But as we lately taught that that kind of government is distinct from the spiritual and internal kingdom of Christ, so we ought to know that they are not adverse to each other."
  42. Sheldon S. Wolin, *Calvin and the Reformation: The Political Education of Protestantism* (432).
  43. In "To the Christian Nobility", Luther writes, "Christ does not have two different bodies, one temporal, the other spiritual. There is but one Head and one body." Martin Luther, *Luther: Selected Political Writings*, Ed. J.M. Porter (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 41.
  44. For a treatment of Calvin's emphasis upon the Lordship of Christ in his commentaries see Timothy Palmer, "Calvin the Transformationist and the Kingship of Christ," *Pro Rege* 35.3 (March 2007): 32-39. See also Calvin's commentary on John 5.27.
  45. Karl Barth, *The Theology of John Calvin*, Trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 221. Also see Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV/3 First Half* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961), 110 – 135. Barth writes, "We must be prepared to hear, even in secular occurrence, not as alien sounds but as segments of that periphery concretely orientated from its centre and towards its totality, as signs and attestations of the lordship of the one prophecy of Jesus Christ, true words which we must receive as such even though they come from this source" (124).
  46. Jurgen Moltmann, *The Politics of Discipleship and Discipleship in Politics: Jurgen Moltmann Lectures in Dialogue with Mennonite Scholars*. Ed. Willard M. Swartley (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2006), 27. In his *Church Dogmatics*, Barth writes the following: "But this means that in the world reconciled by God in Jesus Christ there is no secular sphere abandoned by Him or withdrawn from His control; even there from the human standpoint it seems to approximate most dangerously to the pure and absolute form of utter godlessness. If we say that there is, we are not thinking and speaking in the light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ." See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV/3 First Half* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961), 119.
  47. "Common Grace," *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, James D. Bratt Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 188.
  48. Ibid.
  49. Ibid., p. 189.
  50. VanDrunen's contention that neo-Calvinists de-emphasize the significance of Christ's return by leaving out "consummation" as a category is a misrepresentation of the neo-Calvinist position. Consummation is implied in "redemption." In *Creation Regained*, Wolters writes, "Both the 'already' and the



‘not yet’ aspects characterize the interlude between Christ’s first and second coming. The first coming establishes his foothold in creation, *while the second coming accomplishes the complete victory of his sovereignty.*” Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 76 (Emphasis mine). Also see Spykman’s treatment in part five of *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics* titled “The Consummation.”

51. Jon Calvin, *Commentary on John 12:31* .Vol. 2, Trans. Rev. William Pringle (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1949), 36(Emphasis mine). Also see John 13:31.
52. John Calvin, *Commentary on Acts Vol. 1*, Trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1949), 153(Emphasis mine).
53. Ibid.
54. Nicholas Wolterstorff, “In Reply,” *Perspectives: A Journal of Reformed Thought* (Feb. 2008): 18.
55. Ibid., 19.
56. Richard Mouw, *When the Kings Come Marching In: Isaiah and the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1983), 75.
57. Ibid.
58. Abraham Kuyper, *Encyclopaedie*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, I, vi. See also Peter S. Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper’s Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 17. For an excellent, accessible, treatment of Herman Dooyeweerd’s engagement of Kantian thought, see Albert Wolters, “The Intellectual Milieu of Herman Dooyeweerd,” *The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd* (University Press of America, 1985), 1-19.

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